THE SPECTATOR

IT'S good to be back on the job again. While it is all very well to wander off the reservation for a time, there is something indescribably satisfying to one when he gets back where he really belongs. In the six weeks that I have been watching the East wage war I have encountered many surprises and witnessed many really wonderful sights, but I am quite certain that the biggest surprise of all was in store for me upon my return home. One sees strange things all through the country these days; each place you visit is busy with its war work; each would have the stranger believe that business is "as usual," or better than usual—and in many places this is the truth; and each place lays claim to some peculiar distinction in its war record to date.

But on all my trip—and I think I saw the big end of what there was to see—I failed to find a single city that could size up to us in certain respects. The comparison might be carried along any number of lines, all to our credit, but what I particularly have in mind is this: Nowhere else in the country is there a community that has the distinction of owning one less bank and one more newspaper since the war began, with business still going on pretty much as usual, and the citizens cheerfully submitting to the inconvenience and ignominy of being put to bed by the War Economy Commissioner at about 10 o'clock every night. In these certain respects we seem to have all America beat, and since I happened to hear of all this in one day, you can readily imagine my surprise.

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IT may be that Mr. Jensen has the right idea about war economies. Some of his measures, although stringent, seem to be working out all right. But he is nothing if not radical, and daring always, and inclined to be just a bit officious when vested with authority—and has been known to make mistakes at times. Therefore it does not follow that what he says is good for us is so, just because he says it; and the chances are that it would pay us to put on our spectacles and size up the situation occasionally, just for our own benefit, instead of always swallowing the bait, hook, line and sinker, every time he switches his official rod.

Just how far Commissioner Jensen's authority to enforce war economies extends, I am not prepared to say. It may be that he is clothed with plenary powers in this respect; that he has power to make us wear patches on our pants, and go without socks, and drink sour milk, and go to bed at sundown and get up with the chickens—all of which might prove just as sensible as some of the other restrictions enforced—but I hardly think that he will go to such extremes, even granting that he possesses the authority. He is too considerate for that.

But this thought occurs: We are not only a peculiar people, but a very patient people as well. All told, we are fairly well behaved in our public and private manners. Also, we have made such a splendid record in our war work to date, that surely we don't deserve to be punished for any shortcomings of this sort. And still every time one of our local war lords cracks the whip we fall all over each other trying to be the very first to jump through the hoop. Is it that we are overly patriotic, or are we just plain fools in certain respects? Whatever the explanation, it is safe to say that there are any number of communities of our class who would find a peculiar peasure in drumming officious war commissioners out of town.

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THEN as to the Merchant's Bank muddle. How the doors of the unfortunate institution came to be closed is still more or less open to conjecture, all attempted explanations notwithstanding, and there are so many criminations and recriminations in the air that it would seem that the only agency that could possibly hope to clear up the situation is a grand jury. I would not advocate this move, except as a last resort, and then only to close the traps of the scandal-mongers. But the damage is done and no amount of insinuations and innuendoes can undo it . Moreover, the plans for reorganizing the institution are well under way and the prospects are that it will not be long before every injured or inconvenienced person will be substantially satisfied.

So much for the institution itself, and the individuals and concerns directly interested in its liquidation; but what about the ugly rumors that are directed elsewhere? It is quite plain that bad blood is boiling about the town and that there are certain individuals who desire to even up matters, as they view them, even at the risk of shaking public confidence in the other institutions. But whether their grievances be real or imaginary, such a condition ought not to be tolerated for a single minute. As I recall, the legislature passed a law back in 1913, prohibiting idle or malicious gossip concerning the condition of any bank in the state and providing a severe penalty for so doing. It might be well to make use of this law in case the whisperers do not immediately stop their underhanded work.

In this connection, it is perhaps only fair to say that W. W. Armstrong, president of the National Copper Bank and of the Salt Lake Clearing House association, is being hammered from hell to breakfast for the part he played in the affair. All this, too, notwithstanding the fact that the clearing house authorities have openly vindicated him in every particular. Which action, of itself, ought to have been sufficient to satisfy even the most skeptical as to his position in the matter. Now, I don't care for Mr. Armstrong personally, and am dead against him politically, but even the devil is entitled to his dues. Moreover, it's bad business always to strike at a personal or political enemy over the shoulders of an innocent party. In this case a well established and strongly entrenched financial institution is liable to become the injured party, unless the uncalled-for attacks against its president come to a stop at once.

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SO Jack Groesbeck is back from the front for a time, safe and sound, and chuck full of experiences that beggar description. It's good to see him around again, for Jack is a regular fellow and—at least so far as I was concerned—he didn't have to go to France to prove it. Fact is, I was not in the least surprised when he set sail for the West front; it was just like him to rush impetuously into the very thick of things and do whatever he could find to do to help the cause along. That's Jack's way. But how he ever managed to pull himself out of the fire long enough to come back home, even for a short stay, is what puzzles me. However, I fancy that one of these fine mornings we will all read at the breakfast table how Jack left the night before for the front—the reason being that he just couldn't keep away from the mix-up any longer.

In saying all these nice things about my friend, I am quite aware that they might well be said of any number of Utahns. But after all, Jack's is a peculiar case. In the first place, he didn't have to go to the front, and I can think of many reasons why he ought not to have taken the risks he did. Then I recall what happened a while back when Jack was in politics. After a spirited campaign, he was defeated for office by a close margin. It was generally supposed that he was bested that day because he was a third-termer, but I was in the convention myself and saw the fight at close range, and I have always felt that, in spite of the clamor of the anti-third-termers, Jack could have won handsomely, had it not been for the fact that he was charged with being a blue-blood and a silk-stocking. This last-minute move on the part of his enemies caught the fancy of the hoi polloi for a moment and the damage was done. They didn't know then what I knew, and what everyone knows now, that he is redblooded to the roots.

But I must confess that Jack has even surprised me. I can readily picture him heading his ambulance right up to the mouth of the biggest Busy Bertha to pull some poor devil out of the fire and hurry him back to the hospital for treatment, but that he really can muster the nerve to stand up and make a speech—and a good one, at that—is an achievement of which I never even dreamed he was capable.

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THE restoration of the old Herald-Republican to its former owners and management gives rise to all sorts of conjectures? Why did they let go of it last March, and why did they suddenly take it back? Also, if it was too heavy a load to pack then, how will it be easier now? Of course, in a very short time the new Herald may expect to receive its fair share of support, but even so, it is a rather risky financial venture at this particular time. Surely its chief backers, every one of whom has keen business sagacity and is continually keeping his eye on the dollar, cannot possibly consider the paper in the light of a money-making proposition.

The new paper promises to support Republican principles, and back the war program to the bitter end, and print all the news; and it is easy to believe all this, provided the present management is given a free hand. Also, it is bound to be breezy and up to the minute and readable every morning. But somebody has got to pay for all this, and are we supposed to believe that whoever it is that foots the bills is doing this just for the pleasure of supporting the Republican party, and backing the president's war program, and providing the people with a newsy paper? One is slow to think that there is such a magnanimous philanthropist in our midst.

I have always been given to understand that Bishop Nibley is a good Republican, and we all know that he is a patriotic American with his whole heart in the war, and it is to be supposed that he enjoys reading a live newspaper every morning, but it's hard to believe that he would shoulder the obligations in sight just for this alone. And I think the same may be said of his associates.

A young married couple was attending a fair in Mississippi. Finding themselves jostled about in the center of a vast crowd, the husband remarked: "I say, dearie, I think you'd better give me the lunch basket. Don't you see, we are apt to lose each other in the crowd."